

sums allocable on a proper ratable basis to the purchase, cost, and maintenance of his or her individual unit or participating interest; (4) limit commercial features to those reasonably calculated to promote the economic soundness of the project and the living convenience of the participants, retaining the essential character of a residential project.

(c) No such project, development, or enterprise may be approved which involves an initial grouping of more than 500 veterans, or a cost of more than five million dollars, unless it is conclusively shown to the satisfaction of the approving officer that a greater number of veterans or dollar amount will assure substantial advantages to the veteran-participants which could not be achieved in a smaller project.

(d) When approved as in this section provided, and upon performance of the conditions indicated in the prior approval, proper guaranty certificate or certificates may be issued in connection with the loan or loans to be guaranteed on behalf of eligible veterans participating in the project, development or enterprise not to exceed in total amount the sum of the guaranties applied for by the individual participants and for which guaranty each participant is then eligible.

(e) In lieu of guaranty as authorized in paragraph (d) of this section, insurance shall be available on application by the lender and all veterans concerned. In such case the insurance credit shall be limited to 15 percent of the obligation of the veteran applicant (subject to available eligibility) and the total insurance credit in respect to the veterans' loans involved in the project shall not exceed 15 percent of the aggregate of the principal sums of the individual indebtedness incurred by the veterans participating in the project for the purpose of acquiring their respective interests therein.

[13 FR 7280, Nov. 27, 1948, as amended at 20 FR 9180, Dec. 10, 1955; 24 FR 2656, Apr. 7, 1959; 40 FR 34593, Aug. 18, 1975; 46 FR 43673, Aug. 31, 1981; 61 FR 28058, June 4, 1996]

§ 36.4344 Lender Appraisal Processing Program.

(a) *Delegation of authority to lenders to review appraisals and determine reason-*

able value. (1) To be eligible for delegation of authority to review VA appraisals and determine the reasonable value of properties to be purchased with VA guaranteed loans, a lender must (i) have automatic processing authority under 38 U.S.C. 3702(d), and (ii) employ one or more staff appraisal reviewers acceptable to the Secretary.

(2) To qualify as a lender's staff appraisal reviewer an applicant must be a full-time member of the lender's permanent staff and may not be employed by, or perform services for, any other mortgagee. The individual must not engage in any private pursuits in which there will be, or appear to be, any conflict of interest between those pursuits and his/her duties, responsibilities, and performance as a Lender Appraisal Processing Program (LAPP) staff appraisal reviewer. Three years of experience is necessary to qualify as a lender's staff appraisal reviewer. That experience must demonstrate a knowledge of, and the ability to apply industry-accepted principles, methods, practices and techniques of appraising, and the ability to competently determine the value of property within a prescribed geographical area. The individual must demonstrate the ability to review the work of others and to recognize deviations from accepted appraisal principles, practices, and techniques, errors in computations, and unjustifiable and unsupportable conclusions.

(3) Lenders that meet the requirements of 38 U.S.C. 3702(d), and have a staff appraisal reviewer determined acceptable by VA, will be authorized to review appraisals and make reasonable value determinations on properties that will be security for VA guaranteed loans. The lender's authorization will be subject to a one-year probationary period. Additionally, lenders must satisfy initial and subsequent VA office case review requirements prior to being allowed to determine reasonable value without VA involvement. The initial office case review requirement must be satisfied in the VA regional office in whose jurisdiction the lender's staff appraisal reviewer is located before the LAPP authority may be utilized by that lender in any other VA office's jurisdiction. To satisfy the initial office case review requirement, the first five

cases of each lender staff appraisal reviewer involving properties in the regional office location where the staff appraisal reviewer is located will be processed by him or her up to the point where he or she has made a reasonable value determination and fully drafted, but not issued, the lender's notification of reasonable value letter to the veteran. At that point, and prior to loan closing, each of the five cases will be submitted to the local VA office. After a staff review of each case, VA will issue a Certificate of Reasonable Value, which the lender may use in closing the loan automatically if it meets all other requirements of the VA. If these five cases are found to be acceptable by VA, the lender's staff appraisal reviewer will be allowed to fully process subsequent appraisals for properties located in that VA office's jurisdiction without prior submission to VA and issuance by VA of a Certificate of Reasonable Value. Lenders must also satisfy a subsequent VA office case review requirement in each additional VA office location in which they desire to extend and utilize this authority. Under this requirement, the lender must have first satisfied the initial office case review requirement and then must submit to the additional VA office(s) the first case each staff appraisal reviewer processes in the jurisdiction of that office. As provided under the initial office case review requirement, VA office personnel will issue a Certificate of Reasonable value for this case and subsequently determine the acceptability of the lender's staff appraisal reviewer's processing. If VA finds this first case to be acceptable, the lender's staff appraisal reviewer will be allowed to fully process subsequent cases in that additional VA office's jurisdiction without prior submission to VA. The initial and subsequent office case review requirements may be expanded by VA if acceptable performance has not been demonstrated. After satisfaction of the initial and subsequent office case review requirements, routine reviews of LAPP cases will be made by VA staff based upon quality control procedures established by the Under Secretary for Benefits. Such review will be made on a random sampling or performance related

basis. During the probationary period a high percentage of reviews will be made by VA staff.

(4) The following certification by the lender's nominated staff appraisal reviewer must be provided with the lender's application for delegation of LAPP authority:

I hereby acknowledge and represent that by signing the Uniform Residential Appraisal Report (URAR), FHLMC (Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation) Form 70/ FNMA (Federal Notice Mortgage Association) Form 1004, I am certifying, in all cases, that I have personally reviewed the appraisal report. In doing so I have considered and utilized recognized professional appraisal techniques, have found the appraisal report to have been prepared in compliance with applicable VA requirements, and concur with the recommendations of the fee appraiser, who was assigned by VA to the case. Furthermore, in those cases where clarifications or corrections have been requested from the VA fee appraiser there has been no pressure or influence exerted on that appraiser to remove or change information that might be considered detrimental to the subject property, or VA's interests, or to reach a predetermined value for that property. *Signature of Staff Appraisal Reviewer.*

(5) Other certifications required from the lender will be specified with particularity in the separate instructions issued by the Secretary, as noted in § 36.4344(b).

(b) *Instructions for LAPP Procedures.* The Secretary will publish separate instructions for processing appraisals under the Lenders Appraisal Processing Program. Compliance with these regulations and the separate instructions issued by the Secretary is deemed by VA to be the minimum exercise of due diligence in processing LAPP cases. Due diligence is considered by VA to represent that care, as is to be properly expected from, and ordinarily exercised by, reasonable and prudent lenders who would be dependent on the property as security to protect its investment.

(c) *VA minimum property requirements.* Lenders are responsible for determining that the property meets VA minimum property requirements. The separate instructions issued by the Secretary will set forth the lender's ability to adjust, remove, or alter the fee appraiser's or fee compliance inspector's recommendations concerning

VA minimum property requirements. Condominiums, planned-unit developments and leasehold estates must have been determined acceptable by VA. A condominium or planned-unit development which is acceptable to the Department of Housing and Urban Development or the Department of Agriculture may also be acceptable to VA.

(d) *Adjustment of value recommendations.* The amount of authority to upwardly adjust the fee appraiser's estimated market value during the lender's staff appraisal reviewer's initial review of the appraisal report or to subsequently process an appeal of the lender's established reasonable value will be specified in the separate instructions issued by VA as noted in § 36.4344(b). The amount specified must not in any way be considered an administrative adjustment figure which may be applied indiscriminately and without valid basis or justification with the sole purpose of reaching an amount necessary to complete the sale or mortgage transaction.

(1) *Adjustment during initial review.* Any adjustment during the staff appraisal reviewer's initial review of the appraisal report must be fully and clearly justified in writing on the appraisal report form or, if necessary, on an addendum. The basis for the adjustment must be adequate and reasonable by professional appraisal standards. If real estate market or other valid data was utilized in arriving at the decision to make the adjustment, such data must be attached to the appraisal report. All adjustments, comments, corrections, justifications, etc., to the appraisal report must be made in a contrasting color, be clearly legible, and signed and dated by the staff appraisal reviewer.

(2) *Processing appeals.* The authority provided under 38 U.S.C. 3731(d) which permits a lender to obtain a VA fee panel appraiser's report which VA is obligated to consider in an appeal of the established reasonable value shall not apply to cases processed under the authority provided by this section. All appeals of VA fee appraisers' estimated market values or lenders' reasonable value determinations above the amount specified in the separate instructions issued by VA must be sub-

mitted, along with the lender's recommendations, if any, to VA for processing and final determination. Unless otherwise authorized in the separate instructions lenders must also submit appeals, regardless of the amount, to VA in all cases where the staff appraisal reviewer has made an adjustment during their initial review of the appraisal report to the fee appraiser's market value estimate. The fee appraiser's estimated market value or lender's reasonable value determination may be increased only when such increase is clearly warranted and fully supported by real estate market or other valid data considered adequate and reasonable by professional appraisal standards and the lender's staff appraisal reviewer clearly and fully justifies the reasoning and basis for the increase in writing on the appraisal report form or an addendum. The staff appraisal reviewer must date and sign the written justification and must cite within it the data used in arriving at the decision to make the increase. All such data shall be attached to the appraisal report form and any addendum.

(e) *Notification.* It will be the responsibility of the lender to notify the veteran borrower in writing of the determination of reasonable value and related conditions specific to the property and to provide the veteran with a copy of the appraisal report. Any delay in processing the notification of value must be documented. Any delay of more than five work days between the date of the lender's receipt of the fee appraiser's report and date of the notification of value to the veteran, without reasonable and documented extenuating circumstances, will not be acceptable. A copy of the lender notification letter to the veteran and the appraisal report must be forwarded to the VA office of jurisdiction at the same time the veteran is notified. In addition, the original appraisal report, related appraisal documentation, and a copy of the reasonable value determination notification to the veteran must be submitted to the VA with the request for loan guaranty.

(f) *Indemnification.* When the Secretary has incurred a loss as a result of a payment of claim under guaranty and in which the Secretary determines an

increase made by the lender under § 36.4344(d) or (f) was unwarranted, or arbitrary and capricious, the lender shall indemnify the Secretary to the extent the Secretary determines such loss was caused, or increased, by the increase in value.

(g) *Affiliations.* A lender affiliated with a real estate firm builder, land developer or escrow agent as a subsidiary division, investment or any other entity in which it has a financial interest or which it owns may not use this authority for any cases involving the affiliate unless the lender demonstrates to the Secretary's satisfaction that the lender and its affiliate(s) are essentially separate entities that operate independently of each other, free of all cross-influences (e.g., a formal corporate agreement exists which specifically sets forth this fact).

(h) *Quality Control Plans.* The lender must have an effective self-policing or quality control system to ensure the adequacy and quality of their LAPP staff appraisal reviewer's processing and, that its activities do not deviate from high standards of integrity. The quality control system must include frequent, periodic audits that specifically address the appraisal review activity. These audits may be performed by an independent party, or by the lender's independent internal audit division which reports directly to the firm's chief executive officer. The lender must agree to furnish findings and information under this system to VA on demand. While the quality control personnel need not be appraisers, they should have basic familiarity with appraisal theory and techniques and the ability to prescribe appropriate corrective action(s) in the appraisal review process when discrepancies or problems are identified. The basic elements of the system will be described in separate instructions issued by the Secretary. Copies of the lender's quality control plan or self-policing system evidencing appraisal related matters must be provided to the VA office of jurisdiction with the lender's application for LAPP authority.

(i) *Fees.* The Secretary may require mortgagees to pay an application fee and/or annual fees, including additional fees for each branch office authorized

to process cases under the authority delegated under this section, in such amounts and at such times as the Secretary may require.

(j) *Withdrawal of lender authority.* The authority for a lender to determine reasonable value may be withdrawn by the Loan Guaranty Officer when proper cause exists. A lender's authority to make reasonable value determinations shall be withdrawn when the lender no longer meets the basic requirements for delegating the authority, or when it can be shown that the lender's reasonable value determinations have not been made in accordance with VA regulations, requirements, guidelines, instructions or applicable laws, or when there is adequate evidence to support reasonable belief by VA that a particular unacceptable act, practice, or performance by the lender or the lender's staff has occurred. Such acts, practices or performance include, but are not limited to: Demonstrated technical incompetence (i.e., conduct which demonstrates an insufficient knowledge of industry accepted appraisal principles, techniques and practices; or the lack of technical competence to review appraisal reports and make value determinations in accordance with those requirements); substantive or repetitive errors (i.e., any error(s) of a nature that would materially or significantly affect the determination of reasonable value or condition of the property; or a number or series of errors that, considered individually, may not significantly impact the determination of reasonable value or property condition, but which when considered in the aggregate would establish that appraisal reviews or LAPP case processing are being performed in a careless or negligent manner), or continued instances of disregard for VA requirements after they have been called to the lender's attention.

(1) Withdrawal of authority by the Loan Guaranty Officer may be either for an indefinite or a specified period of time. For any withdrawal longer than 90 days a reapplication for lender authority to process appraisals under these regulations will be required. Written notice will be provided at least 30 days in advance of withdrawal unless the Government's interests are exposed

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to immediate risk from the lender's activities in which case the withdrawal will be effected immediately. The notice will clearly and specifically set forth the basis and grounds for the action. There is no right to a formal hearing to contest the withdrawal of LAPP processing privileges. However, if within 15 days after receiving notice the lender requests an opportunity to contest the withdrawal, the lender may submit, in person, in writing, or through a representative, information and argument to the Loan Guaranty Officer in opposition to the withdrawal. The Loan Guaranty Officer will make a recommendation to the Regional Office Director who shall make the determination as to whether the action should be sustained, modified or rescinded. The lender will be informed in writing of the decision.

(2) The lender has the right to appeal the Regional Office Director's decision to the Under Secretary for Benefits. In the event of such an appeal, the Under Secretary for Benefits will review all relevant material concerning the matter and make a determination that shall constitute final agency action. If the lender's submission of opposition raises a genuine dispute over facts material to the withdrawal of LAPP authority, the lender will be afforded an opportunity to appear with a representative, submit documentary evidence, present witnesses and confront any witness the Veterans Benefits Administration presents. The Under Secretary for Benefits will appoint a hearing officer or panel to conduct the hearing. When such additional proceedings are necessary, the Under Secretary for Benefits shall base the determination on the facts as found, together with any information and argument submitted by the lender.

(3) In actions based upon a conviction or civil judgment, or in which there is no genuine dispute over material facts, the Under Secretary for Benefits shall make a decision on the basis of all the information in the administrative record, including any submission made by the lender.

(4) Withdrawal of the LAPP authority will require that VA make subsequent determinations of reasonable value for the lender. Consequently, VA

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staff will review each appraisal report and issue a Certificate of Reasonable Value which can then be used by the lender to close loans on either the prior VA approval or automatic basis.

(5) Withdrawal by VA of the lender's LAPP authority does not prevent VA from also withdrawing automatic processing authority or taking debarment or suspension action based upon the same conduct by the lender.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 3731)

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2900-0513)

[55 FR 21019, May 22, 1990]

§ 36.4345 Waivers, consents, and approvals; when effective.

No waiver, consent, or approval required or authorized by the regulations concerning guaranty or insurance of loans to veterans shall be valid unless in writing signed by the Secretary or the subordinate officer to whom authority has been delegated by the Secretary.

[13 FR 7281, Nov. 27, 1948]

§ 36.4346 Servicing procedures for holders.

(a) *Establishment of loan servicing program.* The holder of a loan guaranteed or insured by the Secretary shall develop and maintain a loan servicing program which follows accepted industry standards for servicing of similar type conventional loans. The loan servicing program established pursuant to this section may employ different servicing approaches to fit individual borrower circumstances and avoid establishing a fixed routine. However, it must incorporate each of the provisions specified in paragraphs (b) through (l) of this section.

(b) *Procedures for providing information.* (1) Loan holders shall establish procedures to provide loan information to borrowers, arrange for individual loan consultations upon request and maintain controls to assure prompt responses to inquiries. One or more of the following means of making information readily available to borrowers is required.

(i) An office staffed with trained servicing personnel with access to loan